

# 9

Design is important to every community. Land use, transportation, environmental, and infrastructure decisions affect and are affected by the design of the built environment. At the design workshop on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007, stakeholders further refined their design goals and developed specific recommendations. At the workshop, staff presented a summary of the adopted Commercial Design Standards (including Vertical Mixed Use (VMU)) and residential design tools. Voluntary design guidelines were also discussed. These were posted online from March through May 2007 in order to get input from more stakeholders. These standards and tools provide predictability and assurance about future development and help to reduce or avoid conflict when a neighborhood is faced with future development.



**Figure 9-1: Commercial development in Oak Hill**

## CHARACTER OF OAK HILL

The shape and form of Oak Hill is linked to the great pride residents have for the Hill Country character of the area, due to its beautiful, tree-filled surroundings, use of local materials and plants, and low building heights. This feeling draws on Oak Hill's long-gone era of ranches and vast open spaces, and lives on in its large residential lots.



**Figure 9-2: Oak Hill Pizza Garden**

Over time, a variety of commercial projects have emerged throughout the planning area. However, the large-lot and semi-rural character of Oak Hill (especially west of William Cannon and past the "Y") have remained its most noticeable trait.

Stakeholders realize the importance of balancing the natural beauty of Oak Hill's open spaces with the creation of a mix of uses along existing corridors. Stakeholders want new development and redevelopment to provide pedestrian amenities. Key ideas that came out of the planning meetings were "balance," "hill country feel," and "preserve." These themes dominated stakeholder comments and are reflected throughout this chapter.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

**9.A.** Require landscaping along roadways, sidewalks, bike paths, and around bus stops to provide shade in order to encourage pedestrian, bicycling, and mass transportation.

### **9.A.1**

Incorporate pedestrian-friendly site design standards in all new commercial development and redevelopment projects to create safe pedestrian environment in the planning area.

9.A.1a—Provide open space and/or pedestrian amenities such as benches, bike racks, fountains, etc. for development sites greater than one acre.

9.A.1b—Provide street plantings at the time of new construction or major redevelopment.

9.A.1c—Provide pedestrian and bike connections from adjacent parkland and/or residential areas.

9.A.1d—Provide shaded sidewalks along all publicly visible building façades.

9.A.1e—Parking should be placed behind or to the side of the building with vegetative screens to buffer sidewalks and trees.

9.A.1f—Promote the use of solar power shading devices in parking lots.

9.A.1g—Increase sidewalk width requirements from 12 to 15 feet.

9.A.1h—Comply with applicable water quality regulations for impervious cover by exploring pervious materials for sidewalks and parking areas.

9.A.1i—Limit the amount of curb cuts by sharing driveways and parking areas with adjacent property owners.

9.A.1j—Building façades should be brought close to the sidewalks while still abiding by the minimum sidewalk width specifications for new sidewalks.

### **9.A.2**

Encourage incorporation of pedestrian friendly building design elements in all non-residential development and redevelopment projects within the planning area.

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9.A.2a—Utilize limestone, brick, or other regional building materials compatible with the Oak Hill “Hill Country” look.

9.A.2b—Integrate solar power and solar hot water heating into building design.

9.A.2c—Integrate green building practices such as solar power panels, solar hot water heating, wind power, rainwater collection systems, green roofs and water quality controls as necessary. If possible, projects should strive to achieve one star or higher rating under the City of Austin Green Building Program or other environmental programs.

9.A.2d—Provide façade articulation of wall recesses and projections and/or different colors and textures.

9.A.2e—Make primary entrances visible by using architectural details, planters, enhanced light fixtures, etc.

9.A.2f—At least 75% of the building’s front façade (facing the principal street) should consist of storefronts with at least two separate entrances.

9.A.2g—Provide for liner stores in building façade. A liner store is a commercial use on the ground floor of a building located not more than 30 feet from the street right-of-way with an entrance facing the street.

9.A.2h—Provide glazing to add interest for pedestrians and provide a human-scale element on the building façade. (Glazing is the panes or sheets of glass or other non-glass material made to be set in frames, as in windows or doors.)

9.A.2i—Provide roof design such as parapets and sloping angles.

9.A.2j—Consider design and application of sustainable roof such as vegetated roofs and/or rainwater collection systems.

### **9.B. Enhance the Hill Country look of Oak Hill by preserving trees and addressing aesthetic improvements in the planning area.**

#### **9.B.1**

Explore methods to develop and redevelop State Highway 71, U.S. Highway 290 and other roadways to control signage, limit heights, plant trees, and preserve natural beauty of the environment.

9.B.1a—Use low-luminance light sources, light shields, and other methods on street lights to protect the night sky from light pollution.

**9.B.1b**—Design commercial signs and billboards in a tasteful manner that would limit light pollution after business hours.

**9.B.1c**—Preserve trees (such as oaks, elms, and pecan trees) that are more than 100 years old by using two feet of mulch over the roots during construction.

**9.B.1d**—Partner with tree preservation experts on tree preservation practices in Oak Hill during new development. Promote trenching and other appropriate methods around existing oaks to prevent the spread of Oak Wilt.

**9.B.1e**—Utilize design elements and native materials in a consistent manner throughout new developments.

**9.B.1f**—Provide design elements that are compatible with Oak Hill's Hill Country town look.

**9.B.1g**—Provide landscaping in medians to create scenery at interchanges.

### **9.C. Balance development and environmental protection by maintaining a vibrant residential and commercial community that demonstrates caring stewardship of the environment.**

#### **9.C.1**

Ensure that the environmental impact on the Edwards Aquifer and the existing natural landscape is kept at a minimum by new commercial development and redevelopment in Oak Hill.

**9.C.1a**—Incorporate water control measures within the design of the site.

**9.C.1b**—Provide, protect, and preserve open spaces and environmental features by encouraging cluster developments.

#### **9.C.2**

All new residential development/redevelopment projects in Oak Hill should strive to ensure that the environmental impact on the Edwards Aquifer and the existing natural landscape is kept at a minimum.

**9.C.2a**—Development and redevelopment of large sites should include measures such as pervious paving, rainwater collection system, and smart irrigation where appropriate.

**9.C.2 b**—Encourage developers to explore clustered development as an option, since it provides sufficient housing units while maintaining and preserving considerable amounts of open space.



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9.C.2c—Builders should use the Green Building Standards in their projects whenever possible: Using local materials, considering water needs for landscaping, and installing efficient heating and cooling systems are all steps to building greener homes.

9.C.2d—Builders should explore the option of including a trail through their project site or dedicating an easement near water quality features.

### **9.D. Preserve neighborhood identity, character, affordability, and diversity.**

#### **9.D.1**

New single-family and multi-family developments/redevelopments should be compatible with existing residential architecture to reinforce the Hill Country character of Oak Hill, in terms of materials, lighting, and height.

9.D.1a—Preserve Old German-style masonry and limestone construction.

9.D.1b—Place overhangs on roofs for shade.

9.D.1c—Provide abundant porch space.

9.D.1d—Utilize metal roofing or some other comparable material.

9.D.1e—Preserve character of old while incorporating sustainable green building practices.

9.D.1f—Incorporate vegetative buffers for all new residential neighborhoods.

### **9.E. Provide managed connectivity between various neighborhoods while maintaining the quiet enjoyment of neighborhoods.**

#### **9.E.1**

All new residential development and redevelopment projects should incorporate the following design elements to increase walk-ability throughout the Oak Hill area.

9.E.1a—Provide sidewalks for all new residential subdivisions.

9.E.1b—Keep existing trees along sidewalks to provide enough shade for residents walking.





### COMMERCIAL DESIGN

#### DESIGN STANDARDS & MIXED USE

In August 2006, the City adopted a Design Standards and Mixed Use subchapter within the Land Development Code. These standards are intended to improve the quality of all non-residential and mixed-use development in the City. They address building placement, parking, signage, stormwater management, exterior lighting, street trees, sidewalk width, compatibility, and building design. These standards vary according to the type of road adjacent to the site (Core Transit Corridors, Hill Country Roadways, Highways, Internal Circulation Routes, and Suburban Roadways).

Oak Hill has three of these five roadway types:

- Hill Country Roadway (Southwest Parkway),
- Highways (State Highway 71, Loop 1 and U.S. Highway 290), and
- Suburban Roadways (all other roads in Oak Hill).

Additionally, the design standards have specific provisions for sites greater than 5 acres, which can apply to larger non-residential developments. These provisions include specific design elements that would enhance the quality of such projects.

Participants at the February 2007 design workshop were asked to prioritize site design and building design standards. Staff organized responses from the workshop into four categories: high priority, medium priority, low priority, and not a priority, in order to guide developers and builders in selecting design standards. Those that were rated high, medium, and low priority are listed below by topic area. A complete list of stakeholder responses can be found in Appendix F.

#### Hill Country Roadway Standards

Hill Country Roadway standards address the character of development, including floor-to-area ratios, building height, impervious cover, roadway vegetative buffers, natural areas, and parking lot medians.

Currently, staff in the Watershed Development Review Department review all development applications for Hill Country Roadway compliance. For more information on the Hill Country Roadway Requirements, visit the City of Austin Website at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/development/default.htm>.



**Figure 9-3: Natural Gardener in Oak Hill**



### 9.A. Require landscaping along roadways, sidewalks, bike paths, and around bus stops to provide shade in order to encourage pedestrian, bicycling, and mass transportation

#### 9.A.1

Incorporate pedestrian friendly **site design standards** in all new commercial development and redevelopment projects to create safe pedestrian environment in the planning area.

#### **HIGH PRIORITY**

9.A.1a—Provide open space and/or pedestrian amenities such as benches, bike racks, fountains, etc. for development sites greater than one acre.

9.A.1b—Provide street plantings at the time of new construction or major redevelopment.

9.A.1c—Provide pedestrian and bike connections from adjacent parkland and/or residential areas.



**Figure 9-4: A shaded sidewalk**

#### **MEDIUM PRIORITY**

9.A.1d—Provide shaded sidewalks along all publicly visible building facades.

9.A.1e—Parking should be placed behind or to the side of the building with vegetative screens to buffer sidewalks and trees.

9.A.1f—Promote the use of solar power shading devices in parking lots.

#### **LOW PRIORITY**

9.A.1g—Increase sidewalk width requirements from 12 to 15 feet.

9.A.1h—Comply with applicable water quality regulations for impervious cover by exploring pervious materials for sidewalks and other pedestrian surfaces.



**Figure 9-5: A pedestrian friendly streetscape**





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9.A.1i—Limit the amount of curb cuts by sharing driveways and parking areas with adjacent property owners.

9.A.1j—Building façades should be brought close to the sidewalks while still abiding by the minimum sidewalk width specifications for new sidewalks.

### 9.A.2

Encourage incorporation of pedestrian friendly **building design elements** in all non-residential development and redevelopment projects within the planning area.

#### **HIGH PRIORITY**

9.A.2a—Use limestone, brick, or other regional building materials compatible with the Oak Hill “Hill Country” look.

9.A.2b—Integrate solar power into building design.

9.A.2c—Integrate green building practices such as solar power panels, wind power, rainwater collection systems, green roofs and water quality controls as necessary. If possible, projects should strive to achieve one star or higher rating under the City of Austin Green Building Program or other environmental programs.

#### **MEDIUM PRIORITY**

9.A.2d—Provide façade articulation with wall recesses, projections, and/or different colors and textures.

9.A.2e—Make primary entrances visible by using architectural details, planters, enhanced light fixtures, and the like.

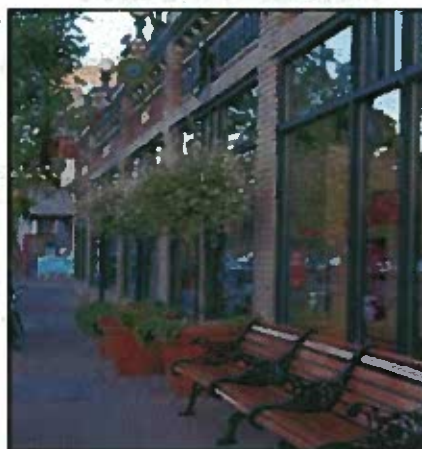
9.A.2f—At least 75% of the building’s front façade (facing the principal street) should consist of storefronts with at least two separate entrances.



**Figure 9-6: A solar power shading device in a parking lot**



**Figure 9-7: Porous pavement**



**Figure 9-8: Pedestrian amenities and glazing on the facade**





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9.A.2g—Provide for liner stores in building façade. A liner store is a commercial use on the ground floor of a building located not more than 30 feet from the street right-of-way with an entrance facing the street.

### **LOW PRIORITY**

9.A.2h—Provide glazing to add interest for pedestrians and provide a human-scale element on the building façade. (Glazing is the panes or sheets of glass or other non-glass material made to be set in frames, as in windows or doors.)

9.A.2i—Provide roof design such as parapets and sloping angles.

9.A.2j—Consider design and application of sustainable roof such as vegetated roofs and/or rainwater collection systems.

## **COMMERCIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES**

In addition to prioritizing these commercial design standards, Oak Hill stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide additional recommendations for commercial design elements in Oak Hill. By establishing voluntary design guidelines, stakeholders have taken an active role creating a vision for the future built environment of their neighborhood.

### **9.B. Enhance the Hill Country look of the Oak Hill by preserving trees and adding aesthetic improvements in the planning area.**

#### **9.B.1**

Explore methods to develop and redevelop State Highway 71, U.S. Highway 290 and other roadways to control signage, limit heights, plant trees, and preserve natural beauty of the environment.

9.B.1a—Use low-luminance light sources, light shields, and other methods on street lights to protect the night sky from light pollution.

9.B.1b—Design commercial signs and billboards in a tasteful manner that would limit light pollution after business hours.

9.B.1c—Preserve trees (such as oak, elms, and pecan trees) that are more than 100 years old



**Figure 9-9: Example of roof designs**



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by using two feet of mulch over the roots during construction.

9.B.1d—Partner with tree preservation experts on tree preservation practices in Oak Hill during new development. Promote trenching and other appropriate methods around existing oaks to prevent the spread of Oak Wilt.

9.B.1e—Utilize design elements and native materials in a consistent manner throughout new developments.

9.B.1f—Provide design elements that are compatible with Oak Hill's Hill Country town look.

9.B.1g—Provide landscaping in medians to create scenery at interchanges.

### 9.C. Balance development and environmental protection by maintaining a vibrant residential and commercial community that demonstrates caring stewardship of the environment.

#### 9.C.1

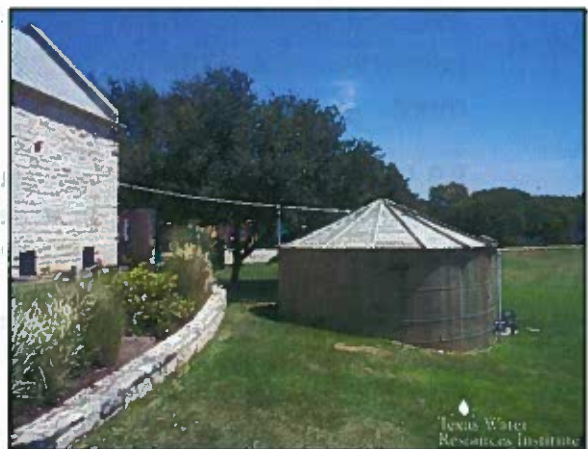
Ensure that the environmental impact on the Edwards Aquifer and the existing natural landscape is kept at a minimum by new commercial development and redevelopment in Oak Hill.

9.C.1a—Incorporate water control measures within the design of the site.

9.C.1b—Provide, protect, and preserve open spaces and environmental features by encouraging cluster developments.



**Figure 9-10: A sustainable roof**



**Figure 9-11: Rainwater harvesting facility**

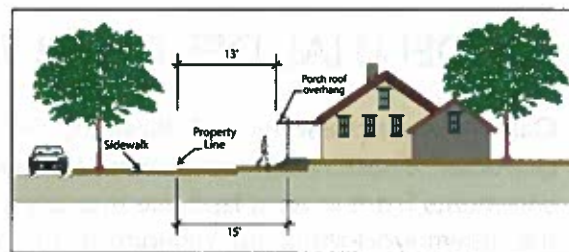


## RESIDENTIAL DESIGN TOOLS

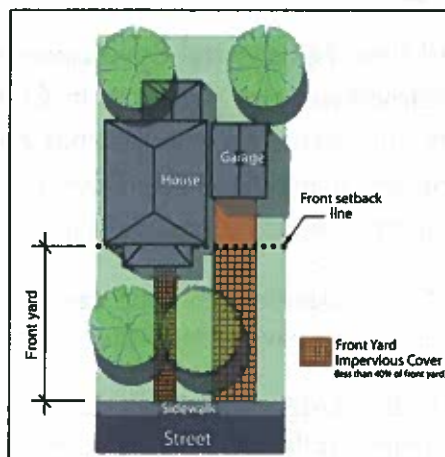
During the February 2007 workshop, stakeholders provided input on the Residential Design Tools, which neighborhoods can adopt as part of the planning process. Once adopted, these residential design tools become law. In addition to the input at the workshop, a survey was posted online (results in Appendix F). The following design tools were supported by stakeholders. However, the total number of responses to the surveys was too low to confidently adopt with this plan.

### FRONT PORCH SETBACK

The minimum front setback in single-family districts is 25 feet. The front porch setback tool reduces the minimum front porch setback from 25 to 15 feet, with the porch roof overhang 13 feet from the front lot line. See Figure 9-12.



**Figure 9-12: Front porch setback**



**Figure 9-13: Parking placement**

### PARKING PLACEMENT

Parking is limited to four spaces in the front- or side-street yards, and impervious cover in the front yard may not exceed 40%, including sidewalks and driveways. See Figure 9-13.

### GARAGE PLACEMENT

A garage may not be closer to the front lot line than the principal building façade. If the parking structure is less than 20 feet behind the principal building façade, the width of the parking structure may not exceed 50% of the width of the principal structure, measured parallel to the front lot line. See Figure 9-14.



**Figure 9-14: Garage placement**





### RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Oak Hill has a predominantly large lot rural residential character. These recommendations are based on comments from several land use meetings, as well as the design workshop, and respond to the most frequently raised concerns about residential design in the planning area.

#### 9.C.2

All new residential development/redevelopment projects in Oak Hill should strive to ensure that the environmental impact on the Edwards Aquifer and the existing natural landscape is kept at a minimum.



**Figure 9-15:**  
**Clustered development**

9.C.2a—Development and redevelopment of large sites should include measures such as pervious paving, rainwater collection system and smart irrigation where appropriate.

9.C.2b—Encourage developers to explore clustered development as an option, since it provides sufficient housing units while maintaining and preserving considerable amounts of open space. See additional information about cluster development in the box below.

9.C.2c—Builders should use the Green Building Standards in their projects whenever possible. Using local materials, considering water needs for landscaping, and installing efficient heating and cooling systems are all steps to building greener homes.

9.C.2d—Builders should explore the option of including a trail through their project site or dedicating an easement near water quality features.

#### 9.D. Preserve neighborhood identity, character, affordability, and diversity.

##### 9.D.1

New single-family and multi-family developments/redevelopments should be compatible with existing residential architecture to reinforce the Hill Country character of Oak Hill, in terms of materials, lighting, and height.

9.D.1a—Preserve Old German-style masonry and limestone construction.

9.D.1b—Place overhangs on roofs for shade.





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9.D.1c—Provide abundant porch space.

9.D.1d—Utilize metal roofing or some other comparable material.

9.D.1e—Preserve character of old while incorporating sustainable green building practices.

9.D.1f—Incorporate vegetative buffers for all new residential neighborhoods.



**Figure 9-16: A vertical mixed use building**

### FRONT YARD PARKING RESTRICTION

Stakeholders are concerned that vehicles parked in the front yard have a negative impact on the neighborhood as a whole. The City has worked hard to help neighborhoods maintain aesthetically pleasing communities. Front yard parking restrictions are available to neighborhoods during the planning process to achieve this. The restriction states that a “person may not park a motor vehicle in the front yard or side yard of a residential property, except in a driveway or a paved parking space depicted on an approved site plan.” At an August 30, 2007, planning meeting, stakeholders voted to prohibit parking on front yards throughout the Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

### 9.E. Provide managed connectivity between various neighborhoods while maintaining the quiet enjoyment of neighborhoods.

#### 9.E.1

All new residential development and redevelopment projects should incorporate the following design elements to increase walk-ability throughout the Oak Hill area.

9.E.1a—Provide sidewalks for all new residential subdivisions.

9.E.1b—Keep existing trees along sidewalks to provide enough shade for residents walking.

### VERTICAL MIXED USE

VMU districts promote pedestrian environments by allowing a mixture of uses within single buildings. More intense development is allowed when these buildings include affordable housing. VMU districts are restricted to the following areas:

- VMU Overlay Districts (along a Highway, Hill Country Roadway, or Suburban Roadway),
- Mixed Use Combining Districts, and
- Non-VMU and non-mixed use sites that are more than 3 acres in size, abut a Highway, Hill Country Roadway, or Suburban Roadway, and receive a conditional use permit.

By default, VMU applies to all non-residential zoning district sites located along Core Transit Corridors and Future Core Transit Corridors.

All neighborhoods in the City were given the opportunity to opt properties into, or out of, VMU districts, subject to approval by City Council. In Oak Hill, the opt-in/opt-out process occurred alongside the neighborhood planning process. Staff held two meetings to discuss VMU opportunities with Oak Hill stakeholders. At the last VMU community meeting on August 30, 2007, the consensus was to not opt any properties into VMU.